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AUTHOR Welch, Nancy
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ABSTRACT

In 1996, the City of Phoenix Enterprise Community Job Linkages Initiative sought to increase employment by matching local people with local jobs. Evaluation of the second project at Friendly House found that Friendly House, during the 18 months of the grant, increased residents' employability skills and linked them with Enterprise Community employers through the following seven services: job readiness training, introduction to computers, case management, support services, job placement assistance, and follow-up at 30, 60, 90, and 120 days after employment. Of 51 people who began working, 65 percent completed the retention period. It was estimated that program participants earned a total of approximately $367,000 during the pilot period. Fifty-eight percent of participants said that the program was excellent; the remaining 42 percent rated it as good. Women outnumbered men in the program, and 85 percent of the participants were Hispanic. More than half were 21 to 34 years of age. Approximately 75 percent were single, divorced, or separated, and many were single parents. The report concludes that if community groups want to increase employment, they must be prepared for a complex, demanding effort. (Included in the report are an executive summary; recommendations; and discussions on: the importance of matching people and jobs; conveying a sense of caring and personal support; the stresses caused by the "numbers" orientation of performance contracting; and program development issues such as using technology, creating alliances, addressing language barriers, and creating a continuum of services.) (KB)

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Job Linkages Review:

Promise and Challenge

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Arizona State University

Job Linkages Review:

Promise and Challenge

by
Nancy Welch
Senior Research Analyst

Submitted to
City of Phoenix Community and Economic Development
and
Friendly House

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JOB LINKAGES: Promise and Challenge
Executive Summary

Beginning in 1996, the City of Phoenix Enterprise Community Job Linkages Initiative set out to increase employment in this distressed area by matching "local people with local jobs." Morrison Institute for Public Policy (School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University) participated in the development of the job linkages initiative and evaluated its two demonstration projects. This report provides the concluding evaluation information for the second project at Friendly House and presents the lessons learned across the job linkages activities.

Friendly House was awarded the second grant for workforce support in March 1998. The purpose of the workforce support RFP was essentially to increase residents' employability skills and link them with EC employers, ideally those with in-house training and advancement opportunities.

At Friendly House, a community service provider for more than 70 years, the approximately $100,000 demonstration grant supported a "makeover" of existing services.

Job Linkages at Friendly House
The originally 12-month Friendly House program was extended for six months and concluded on September 30, 1999. Morrison Institute's first report on the program, Job Linkages Review: Enterprise Community Team and Friendly House, was published in February 1999.

Friendly House contracted to help at least 40 EC residents find jobs with EC employers. The "pay-for-performance" agreement reimbursed Friendly House as participants progressed through various milestones. Jobs were to pay at least $6.18 per hour (20% above minimum wage) with 80 percent of the new employees retaining their employment for at least 120 days. To accomplish these goals, the Friendly House job linkages program provided:

- job readiness training
- introduction to computers
- case management
- support services
- job placement assistance
- follow up at 30, 60, 90, and 120 days after employment.

The Friendly House job linkages training is essentially a workplace "finishing school" where participants polish interviewing skills, learn the basics of job etiquette, and practice presenting themselves to employers. Personal support and social services complement this "placement center" approach. Of 51 people who began working, 65 percent completed the retention period. Friendly House estimated that program participants earned a total of approximately $367,000 during the pilot period with wages ranging from $6.00 to $11.25 per hour.

Telephone interviews with participants have been an important source of feedback for both job linkages demonstration projects. For this second review of Friendly House's workforce support, the bilingual researcher who had interviewed participants initially completed interviews with 12 of 27 participants between September 30-October 9, 1999. All but one of those interviewed said the program had helped them with such skills as how to get a job, understanding what employers want, self esteem, and communication skills. A total of 58 percent of those interviewed said the program was excellent, while the remaining 42 percent rated it as good.

Data from the intake forms and records of 25 (more than 90% of the total) extension participants were used to create a profile of the group. Women outnumbered men in the program, and 85 percent of these participants were Hispanic. More than half (54%) were 21 to 34 years of age with 19 percent from 35-44 years of age. The 18-20 age range included 15 percent of the participants. Eight percent were between 45 and 54 years of age; one person (4%) was over 55 years old. Just over three quarters of the participants were single, divorced, or separated. Many were single parents. Only six (23%) reported receiving Food Stamps with three people showing welfare income. Records showed that four people (15%) were enrolled in an education or training program when they came to the job linkages program. Three reported English as a Second Language, while the fourth was enrolled at a central city community college. Over half reported having a car for personal transportation with five more saying a family vehicle was available.

Work experience among this group included: package delivery, customer service, telemarketing, assembly, machining, quality control checker, cashier, laundry/housekeeping, certified nursing assistant, teacher's aide, drafting aide, janitor, production supervisor, loan processor, waiter, clerical, shipping clerk. But this group also had barriers that would make employment hard to find and keep. Based on the files reviewed, this group appears to share many issues with other low income and unemployed people in terms of being in and out of work, dealing with domestic violence, underestimating how much they need to earn to support themselves, and being uncertain about job direction.

Continuing Promise at Friendly House

Considering the current transition to a "new economy" and its emphases on people and knowledge, employment services are critical to ensuring that today's "have nots" can still become tomorrow's "haves." Friendly House's workforce support program remains promising because it helps residents to be more competitive for local jobs. Friendly House continues to be on the right track. This demonstration project underscored that modest amounts of assistance can result in substantial gains for some individuals. The Friendly House experience confirms that the placement/job readiness model is an important service for the community. Participants who learn the fundamentals of job readiness can then take advantage of the strong economy.

Recommendations for Friendly House

- Continue to expand and diversify employer contacts through a cohesive strategy that targets EC employers with opportunities for training and advancement and reasonable entry-level jobs in specific industries. Coordinate with the systems detailed in the Arizona Workforce Development Plan and used by such organizations as Greater Phoenix Economic Council and the Governor's Strategic Plan for Economic Development in addition to the Phoenix Community and Economic Development Department. The job linkages program will always need to have relationships with broad range of large and small employers, but targeting specific types of jobs and businesses supports advancement, coordination, and quality.

- Develop models of "chaining" in specific industries. For example, what employer(s) would be the best match if the participant wants to be employed in the financial services industry for a long time? Where should they start? What is a viable "chain" for that person? For pathways prevalent in the EC and attractive to a range of participants, develop contacts and networks with appropriate employers.

Lessons from Friendly House's Job Linkages

- ✓ Job readiness skills and employer connections open doors to new opportunities and serve participants as they make decisions about work over time. Modest amounts of training can pay dividends for some people.
- ✓ Participants value quality instruction, personal support, and job connections.
- ✓ Lack of English language skills is one of the toughest barriers to overcome, particularly in this service model. Addressing this barrier in creative ways is critical.
- ✓ Expanding the employer base benefited the program and EC residents. Breadth, depth, and appropriateness of the employer connections are critical features of program.
- ✓ Facilities make a difference in the presentation and operation of the program.

- Review the characteristics of the new economy and consider their implications for the program.
- Expand neighborhood outreach contacts for the program. Continue to develop the program's visibility.
- Review and revise participant records and assessment tools to support participants' choices, ongoing evaluation, and further training.
- Invest in staff training and development so that staff members apply knowledge of adult education, economic development, career development, and human resources administration to the job linkages program.
- Continue to review instruction to ensure its intensity and inclusion of the six-part planning framework. Think through the "what ifs" of an economic downturn. Consider whether program activities are sufficient to insure that job linkages participants would still be competitive if the supply of labor increased.
- Review the major reasons for attrition at various points in the program. Review the cases of those who have left jobs to determine what changes might be needed in the job readiness class.

- Join with other service providers to think through the development of an EC continuum of services that takes advantage of the strengths of each organization.
- Investigate incentives, support systems (i.e., child care, transportation, computer loans), or nontraditional delivery mechanisms (i.e., distance or web-based learning through Friendly House's computer center) that would encourage participants to obtain further training. Work with current participants to identify and test the incentives and systems to determine what would be most attractive to and effective for those with the least skills.
- Expand the use of technology whenever possible for all facets of job linkages. Investigate further opportunities to use technology to help participants overcome language barriers.

A Rich Return from Demonstration Efforts

The job linkages programs affirmed the importance of personal growth, skills, and support to participants, the central role of staff members, and the benefits of solid employer connections in community employment programs. In addition, they showed how quickly the costs of such programs can be matched by wages and benefits. However, the programs also illustrated that individuals' journeys to long-term work include advances and setbacks, and underscored the challenge of creating a network of appropriate employers. The more than two years of job linkages experience confirmed some existing knowledge about employment services and provided some new issues to consider.

Reconnecting Community Organizations and Employers

Community organizations have long sought to help residents find jobs. But in recent years such factors as limitations of time and staff, dramatic population and economic growth, changes in the business environment, public policy directions, and emphases on services over economics have made it harder for community groups to deliver quality services. The job linkages programs provided examples of how to begin to create the relationships between community groups and employers that over time will reconnect the now disparate groups. However, the "team" aspect of the programs warrants much more attention. Building a team for job linkages is still a good idea, but, how it is done needs to be reconsidered.

Job linkage programs are labor and time intensive, and neighborhood activities often rely on the dedication of volunteers. At the same time, businesses now value speed, efficiency, and effectiveness more than ever. A mismatch in the styles among the three parties can easily derail projects that are perceived to be valuable to all. More avenues are for developing productive, trusting relationships among community members, organizations, and employers are clearly needed. The programs' experience revealed the following "rules" for working with employers: 1) Build a trusting relationship; 2) Make sure there is a return on the employer's investment; 3) Understand and honor the firm's policies, processes, and culture; 4) Make the best match possible; 5) View each business as a unique entity.

Matching People and Jobs

The job linkages programs highlighted that "a job" does not guarantee long-term employment. Personal preferences and aptitudes have to be taken into account. Activities that foster an awareness of personal desires and guidance in planning are critical to "attaching" people to the labor force.

The need to match people with jobs underscores the importance of career development expertise and knowledge of tools that inform decisions about skills, training, and jobs. It also means that programs must draw on everything from psychology to adult education, human resources, economic development, and other topics to prepare participants for the world of work. In addition, program staffs require sufficient knowledge of the economy to be clear with participants about will be needed to get the jobs they want. Thus, organizations must view staff development, especially in career development and local economics, and assessment as priorities in the future. At this stage, further development of job linkages depends on knowledge and experience in:

- Economy, industries, and employers
- Technology
- Human resources and career development
- Adult learning and education
- Human services.

Realistically however, even the best matches may fail. Programs and funders must be prepared for participants to lose a job or jobs (or choose to leave) before they become comfortable with being workers.

Caring Truly Counts
A sense of caring and personal support are as important as information about jobs and careers, and may provide the motivation for getting or keeping a job. Confidence and motivation are critical ingredients in workplace success. Caring was the demonstration programs' strongest attribute and an example of where community organizations shine over other types of institutions.

More Capacity for Greater Success
Job linkages illustrated that if community groups want to help increase employment, they must now be prepared for a complex, demanding effort. From an organizational point of view, job linkages' challenges come from addressing complex problems and serving very different audiences at once. The program is complicated by a dynamic, competitive business environment and by the unpredictability of individuals. Successful operations understand what both businesses and people are up against in the marketplace. They have the facilities to prepare people and the savvy to be economy "insiders."

The ideal combination of information and experience is tough—but very possible—for programs to master, whether established or brand new. Because job linkages requires staff and community partners with an unusual combination of skills and the ability to synthesize and apply knowledge from many fields, continual organizational development and capacity building are vital.

Administration
The sites started with similar contracts, but administered them differently. For both organizations, the performance contracting created unexpectedly stressful situations. The performance systems to a degree fostered a "numbers" orientation and focused attention on

"collecting" rather than services. Better ways of challenging service providers and rewarding innovation are warranted. A combination of operating support and incentive payments may be a better method of operation. At the least, flexibility in contracting and administration is vital to keeping the emphasis on programming rather than allowing it to shift to bureaucracy.

Placement numbers are, as they should be, an obvious and common mark of success for community employment programs. However, more thought is needed for reasonable target measures in the areas of retention, upgrading, and community results.

Sense of Place
Attachment to a place is one of job linkages' greatest strengths because it focuses attention on specific people, employers, and community issues. Because employment is such a complex issue, a specific area of focus allows participants and staff to understand issues and situations more readily and fully.

Employment and Community Development
How can programs help to keep new workers in the area so that their wages support local revitalization? One answer is to mobilize participants to "give back." Another option is to more systematically address the issues that affect residents' concerns and ability to work and upgrade. A focus on work puts a different, and more immediate, spin on community development.

Easing the Next Steps
Good things can—and will—happen to many participants in these types of programs. But, even with the best training, there are few shortcuts. Residents will need to explore work and broaden their vision for, and outlooks on, work. Barriers will have to be dealt with over time. Job linkages originally put as much emphasis on upgrading skills as on getting the first quality job. The experience revealed how important a range of services is and how challenging it is to create. A network of providers, businesses, and institutions must come together to devise new incentives and methods for making additional training and education more accessible and more productive.

A New World for Community Organizations
The world is changing as much for community organizations as it is for businesses. Competition, accountability, technology, and shifting resources are just some of the issues. A great deal of thought is needed on how organizations remain viable in the future. The residents in the job linkages projects need assistance and community organizations are important points for initial services. Community groups are especially good at creating the sense of place, caring, and addressing community issues. But their days as employment service providers are numbered without mastering the new economy, technology, and other topics.

Program Development Issues
The most significant program development issues identified across the projects are:

- Developing an interest in the economy, companies, and jobs in addition to people.
- Expanding the employer base to increase options for participants; Finding the information that will lead to strong relationships.

- Extending programs' reach into neighborhoods through marketing and public relations.
- Using technology for communications, networking, and training.
- Determining how to stay in touch with participants to be able to help with upgrading, services, and support.
- Fostering progress to better and better jobs.
- Addressing language barriers.
- Working with a variety of employers, institutions, and organizations to create the continuum of services.

Considerations for the City of Phoenix

Job linkages proved to be a viable strategy for a particular area. Because it is oriented to place and employment centers exist throughout the city, it is an idea that could work almost anywhere. Leaders should consider the following issues in planning further job linkages efforts and in administering other programs.

Operations

Administrative flexibility supports creativity and innovation. The need for accountability for public funds needs to be balanced with opportunities to operate in new ways.

- Technical assistance and capacity building projects are investments that will pay off in new and better services.
- Community development and employment development go hand in hand because of the support systems needed to keep residents in the workforce.

Employment and Education

- Many of the residents who come to a community employment program have already fallen through the cracks of other systems. Thus, prevention is as much a job linkages strategy as job readiness.
- Information about jobs and employers is fundamental to job linkages programs. As with investing in capacity among community organizations, city departments should invest in sharing existing data and creating new types of information that would support employment.

Ready for Replication

Job linkages is promising for the EC and other distressed areas of Phoenix because of its connection to place, the presence of community organizations in other areas, and the strong economy. However, replication has to have enough training, funds, commitment, and staff to work. And, other organizations need to learn from the experiences of the two pioneers.

JOB LINKAGES: Promise and Challenge

For the most fortunate of workers, building a career is an orderly, step-by-step process that begins early in life. But for others, long-term employment in fields with decent pay and reasonable futures remains elusive. Traditionally, it is this group which public sector and community-based jobs programs have sought to help. Programs have provided information, education, training, social services, and support as shortcuts to the type of jobs and careers that result in self-sufficiency for individuals and economic vibrancy for communities.

Beginning in 1996, the Phoenix Enterprise Community (EC) Job Linkages Initiative set out to increase employment in this distressed area by helping residents find their way to "quality jobs." The effort involved members of the EC Steering Committee, business people, Phoenix Community and Economic Development Department staff, university researchers, and community advisors. Morrison Institute for Public Policy (School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University) participated in the development of the job linkages initiative and evaluated its two demonstration projects.[1] This report provides the concluding evaluation information for the second demonstration project at Friendly House and presents the lessons learned across the job linkages activities.

New Perceptions of EC Opportunities

The job linkages effort benefitted substantially from several factors that have made workforce development a critical topic for policy makers and business leaders throughout Arizona. For example:

- Acknowledgment of a "new economy" and its effects on employees and firms has highlighted the importance of services for workers in general and for disadvantaged residents in particular. The concern for the growing divide between the "haves" and the "have nots" helped to "make the case" for labor-intensive efforts like job linkages.
- A robust economy and tight job markets have sensitized business leaders and policy makers to workforce issues. Perceptions of labor shortages have encouraged employers to broaden their outlooks on who could fill their jobs and what it takes to maintain a quality workforce.
- Implementation of the 1996 federal welfare reform legislation highlighted the complexities of helping people who have been out of the labor force get and keep family-supporting jobs.

Research by Arizona State University (ASU) faculty and staff members (through the Community Outreach Partnership Center led by Morrison Institute) also played an important part in the job linkages initiative. Two reports in particular helped to reframe the possibilities for increasing employment in the Enterprise Community.[2] ASU geography professors Patricia Gober and Elizabeth Burns described the EC as "job rich" in their report *Job Linkages Among Inner-city Employers and Employees*. In turn, ASU Center for Business Research economist Tom Rex examined employment patterns in all of Phoenix's urban villages and identified several strengths for the South Mountain and Central City areas in comparison to the others.

He concluded, as did Drs. Gober and Burns, that the EC needed help taking advantage of the jobs already in the area, rather than assistance to create new work opportunities. Their work and focus groups done with EC employers by this author underscored the job possibilities in the area and recast it as one of unmined opportunity, instead of hopelessness.

From new and existing data, ASU researchers and City of Phoenix staff members showed that there is a mismatch between EC residents' skills and those needed for a large proportion of the area's jobs. Thus, training, education, and efforts to connect local workers and employers emerged as the best strategies for increasing employment. Unlike some other Enterprise Community cities, job creation and "reverse commuting" to get central city residents to suburban jobs were put on the back burner in Phoenix. The Enterprise Community Job Linkages Subcommittee, with support from the Workforce Development Division of the Phoenix Community and Economic Development Department and Morrison Institute, recommended that a new EC job strategy be based on "local people for local jobs." The Steering Committee adopted the strategy and over several years supported pilot projects, evaluation, and research on capacity building for EC community organizations.

The job linkages originators viewed the major differences between the initiative and traditional community employment programs as:

- direct connections between programs and EC employers
- businesses, residents, and service providers as partners in programs
- the expectation that programs would view residents and employers as customers
- an emphasis on helping residents to begin working at levels commensurate with their skills and then assisting the moves to better jobs
- administrative flexibility.

Demonstration Projects

The Job Linkages Subcommittee and staff members originally envisioned three types of job linkages programs:

- Full-service
- Workforce Support
- Planning and Capacity Building.

Two request for proposal (RFP) processes resulted in the funding of one full-service project and one workforce support effort. No applications were received for the planning and capacity building portion and this issue was put off until a later time.

Keys Community Center received the first grant for the full-service Project STRIDE. The new, nearly $200,000 project began in August 1997 at

Job Linkages Components

- ✓ Community Jobs Team with employers, community members, and service providers
- ✓ Continuum of employment services
- ✓ Case management
- ✓ EC employers and residents as customers
- ✓ Direct connections with EC employers and existing jobs
- ✓ Follow-up and retention services for participants
- ✓ Upgrading and career plans
- ✓ Streamlined administration
- ✓ Matching requirement for community organizations
- ✓ Support services (transportation, childcare etc.)
- ✓ Pay for performance
- ✓ Evaluation and technical assistance

this ten-year-old center. Morrison Institute's final report ***Project STRIDE: Welcome Revivals*** details the results of and recommendations for the positive program.

Friendly House was awarded the second grant for workforce support in March 1998. At Friendly House, a community service provider for more than 70 years, the approximately $100,000 demonstration grant supported a "makeover" of existing services. The purpose of the workforce support RFP was essentially to increase residents' employability skills and link them with EC employers, ideally those with in-house training and advancement opportunities.

Job Linkages at Friendly House

The originally 12-month Friendly House program was extended for six months and concluded on September 30, 1999. Morrison Institute's first report on the program, ***Job Linkages Review: Enterprise Community Team and Friendly House***, was published in February 1999. Based on interviews with staff members, Community Jobs Team members, and participants, observations, and review of various documents, the report described the Friendly House program as "promising" and recommended changes to enhance the project further. The suggestions included expanding the employer base, heeding suggestions from community partners, participants, and employers, and ratcheting up the operation. This final review looks at the profile and outlooks of participants who were involved during the extension period (April through September 1999).

Friendly House has a significant history of service to the Hispanic community and to all EC residents. Although many residents look to Friendly House for assistance, a notable portion of its clientele speaks Spanish exclusively. Friendly House is a major provider of English as a Second Language and adult education classes in the area. The job linkages program is one part of the agency's Adult Education/Workforce Development Department. Friendly House also operates a charter school, child care, immigration assistance, social services, and other programs.

Friendly House contracted to help at least 40 EC residents find jobs with EC employers. The "pay-for-performance" agreement reimbursed Friendly House as participants passed various milestones. Jobs were to pay at least $6.18 per hour (20% above minimum wage) with 80 percent of the new employees retaining their employment for at least 120 days. To accomplish these goals, the Friendly House job linkages program provided:

- two weeks of job readiness training
- an introduction to computers
- case management
- support services
- job placement assistance
- follow up at 30, 60, 90, and 120 days after employment.

To help with some basic needs and ease the transition to work, participants had access to a variety of support services, including bus passes, child care, career and personal counseling,

and food boxes. Some received daily stipends of $8 for expenses during the job readiness class. Several also were given appropriate clothing for job interviews.

The Friendly House job linkages program is essentially a workplace "finishing school" where participants polish interviewing skills, learn the basics of job etiquette, and practice presenting themselves to employers. Personal support and social services complement a "placement center" approach that focuses on rapid employment. The Friendly House's variation on standard job placement programs reportedly matched the preferences of its largely Hispanic clientele. A dedicated staff of four delivers most aspects of the program. A fifth staff person, an employability instructor who usually provided services under a contract with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, worked with job linkages through the extension period.

A Community Jobs Team, comprised of employers (some of which changed over the life of the program to the participants' benefit), representatives of the Garfield, Wilson, and Cesar Chavez neighborhoods, the Phoenix housing department, and Friendly House, guided the program. The team was originally organized along a board of directors model. However after the initial evaluation report, changes were made that allowed for better organization and clearer delineation of roles. These reportedly allowed the team to operate more smoothly and productively.

During the job linkages pilot period, Friendly House renovated the workforce department's space significantly. In a large room that had lacked permanent walls and air conditioning, Friendly House completed new classrooms, office space, a computer center, and many other improvements. As a result, Friendly House has a facility that supports, rather than hampers, its adult education and employment programs. Also during the pilot period, Friendly House received a grant from the Valley of the Sun United Way Working Poor Fund to support the job linkages program further. By the end of the extension period, a second grant for approximately $360,000 was received to expand the job linkages program substantially.

Numbers and Results

According to Friendly House's final report[3] to the City of Phoenix, the agency met its contractual targets. Of the 72 participants who began the job readiness class, 71 percent (51 people) of them went on to jobs, and forty six percent completed the retention period. However, of the 51 people who started working, 65 percent completed the retention period. Friendly House estimated that program participants earned a total of approximately $367,200 during the pilot period. As reported by Friendly House, the initial jobs obtained by the participants paid from $6.00 to $11.25 an hour. More than 70 percent of the participants received health insurance and other benefits through their employers. The average wage reported by Friendly House was $7.50 per hour or 18 percent above the contract requirement. In comparison, the City of Phoenix Job Training Partnership Act wage standard for the program year ending June 30, 1999 was $7.63 per hour.

As discussed below however, responses from "extension" participants in the final telephone survey indicate that earnings among the latter participants may be somewhat higher. For example, hourly wages among those interviewed for this report ranged from $6.32 to $14.45. Two participants reported annual salaries of $18,000 and $20,500 respectively.

Participants' Outlooks on Job Linkages

Telephone interviews with participants have been an important evaluation tool for both job linkages demonstration projects. For this second review of Friendly House's workforce support project, the bilingual researcher who had interviewed participants initially attempted to contact all those who had been in the program during the extension period. A participant list dated July 29, 1999 was provided by Friendly House as a call list. Interviews were completed between September 30-October 9, 1999 with 12 of 27 participants. Except for those whose telephone numbers had been disconnected, at least three attempts were made to reach each person on the list. The results of the interviews are summarized below.

Learning about Job Linkages

Most of the 12 participants interviewed reported hearing about the program from friends, workers at Friendly House programs, and Spanish media sources. In addition, others said they learned about it at meetings at Wilson and Cesar Chavez Schools, two of the neighborhoods involved in the Community Jobs Team. The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) JOBS (the state's welfare-to-work program) referred several to the program.

Nearly all of those interviewed said they enrolled in the job linkages program to get a job or a better job. Two said they were required to attend by the DES JOBS program. In general, participants wanted to learn how to do better with the first steps of acquiring a job, namely completing applications and interviews. The boxed comments illustrate why participants got involved in the program.

Reasons for Participating in Job Linkages

- ✓ I wanted a job. I wanted to work even if it was just part-time.
- ✓ …required by DES and wanted to prepare well for applications and interviews.
- ✓ To learn more about applying for work.
- ✓ Had a job in mind and wanted to gain the skills to get it.
- ✓ Was graduating with my GED and wanted a job.
- ✓ Felt desperate looking for work.
- ✓ To learn how to fill in applications and how to prepare for an interview.

Program Activities and Benefits

When asked about what activities they participated in, the respondents mentioned parts of the job readiness class. The following comments reveal what was "top of mind" about the program. The responses are presented in the participants' own words except where editing was needed for clarity.

- *Role playing for interviews and guest speakers who are job recruiters*
- *How not to get nervous, how to prepare for an interview*
- *Resumes and putting resume on the computer; self-esteem building; how to dress for interviews; actually going out to interviews*
- *Learning how to present yourself to prospective employers, interviewing for jobs, confidence building, applications, resumes*
- *Job readiness*
- *Basic computers and self esteem building*

All but one of those interviewed said the program had helped them with such skills as how to get a job, understanding what employers want, self esteem, and communication skills. All told, 58 percent of those interviewed said the program was excellent, while the remaining 42 percent rated it as good. The following comments highlight the benefits participants said they got from the program.

- *They helped us find and undertake jobs.*
- *Improved my interview skills and filling out applications*
- *Helped find a job quickly*
- *Speaking with confidence, being able to talk without getting nervous, understanding employers, being more professional and creating a resume*
- *Confidence was boosted...before finishing class I got hired at the first job I interviewed for—When you're young there are ways to present yourself that you don't even realize. The class helps you see what employers are looking for.*
- *How to present oneself with confidence*
- *Mostly it gave confidence*

Reported "Best" Parts

Those interviewed cited the instruction, personal support, and getting jobs quickly as the aspects of the program they liked the best. The following quotations describe some of their favorite aspects.

- *They help a person search for a job. They are all so nice there and helpful—as helpful as anyone could ever be.*
- *The instructor...She was straight out, truthful and enthusiastic.*
- *Communication with staff and the help finding a job quickly. They really tried to help as much as possible.*
- *It was fun, not boring. It was laid back. You couldn't wait to return. Every day was a learning experience. Angie (the job readiness class instructor) made it fun.*
- *It was a wonderful self-esteem builder.*
- *They have a lot of help that they offer, especially to get me the job I wanted.*
- *It boosts your confidence. When you come out, you feel different about presenting yourself for a job. We learned a lot. Angie was an awesome lady. She's one heck of an encouraging person.*
- *You get to know a lot of people and develop your communication skills.*
- *The program itself—everything was great...people tool a personal interest—the staff genuinely cared.*
- *Everything that I got involved with—Joe's a good guy.*
- *Everything, especially meeting and getting to know the staff there.*

When asked what they liked least about the program, nearly 60 percent replied "nothing" or such comments as "I liked everything. They treated everyone well." Others cited aspects of the program that they did not like. In particular, one person thought the program was too basic for her needs. Others commented:

- *There was nothing I didn't like except that some of the participants were a drag because they didn't want to be there. They'd hold up the class by arriving late.*
- *They couldn't help me in the areas I needed. They had too much geared toward entry-level positions.*
- *That it was so short; got a little bit of computer help but would like to have had more training on it.*

Suggestions for Improvement and Further Training

Participants suggested a variety of improvements for the program. Their recommendations addressed the need to "weed out" those who did not really want to be there, plus a desire for more computer training. Several of those interviewed said that more help exploring various careers would be a positive change as would "specific training to get someone ready for a specific job." Additional follow up from staff members was also mentioned. Several recommended additional advertising to get more people involved in the program.

One person cited her perception of Friendly House ("I thought they only did AA classes and stuff like that.") as something that had almost prevented her from coming to the job linkages program. Communicating the entire range of programs at the 1st Avenue location would benefit the rest of the community according to this participant. Also, since her current employer was looking for other workers, she suggested a closer link between Friendly House and the business she works for.

Another person voiced a desire for help with finding a less physically demanding job with shorter hours. The job linkages program was too elementary for another participant. She recommended that "for people with college degrees, there needs to be something geared for their higher skills—advanced levels. They gave me the basic tools, and I added on what I needed to build up my resume and my interviewing skills."

When asked about further training needs, participants cited areas that Friendly House (or another provider) could help them with in the near future. The training suggestions were uniformly linked to advancement in a current job or to the realization that more skills would be needed to get a better job. Training needs included:

- English and GED classes
- Computer training, including computer aided design
- Management skills seminars/workshops
- Training in Microsoft Outlook

Others commented that their employers offered training and they intended to take advantage of that.

Although the program reportedly covered what they wanted to learn (such as "how to fill out an application without feeling like an idiot" and "put me on the right track"), a few participants mentioned changes they would like to see in the program, including English classes and better job opportunities. When asked in general how well Friendly House prepared them for working, two thirds said "very well" and the remaining third reported "somewhat."

Among these 12 people, 11 started a paid job at the end of the training. The 12th went to another short-term program and waited until the job she wanted opened up. (She obtained the job she had waited for.) At the time of the interviews, these participants were working at the following firms and organizations (presented in alphabetical order):

- All Trades Staffing
- APS through The Atlantic Group
- Arizona State Fair
- Arizona state agency (specific location not reported)
- Crowne Plaza Suites
- Friendly House
- NCS Health Care
- Phoenician Resort
- Phoenix Day Child and Family Learning Center
- Safeway
- University of Phoenix
- USF Processors

About half of those interviewed had gotten jobs through Friendly House and about half had identified jobs on their own. Considering the timing of the interviews, several participants had obtained their current job on their own, but Friendly House had helped them to get their first position after the program. For example, one person reported that the skills she had learned in the program helped her to get a better job several months later. In addition, as participants described their current jobs, there had often been movement to more responsibility or different duties.

Keeping in Touch

Nearly 60 percent of those interviewed had spoken to a Friendly House staff member in the past month with another 17 percent having had contact in the past two months. About one quarter had not spoken with a Friendly House staff member for more than two months. Contact is often related to ongoing assistance, most often bus passes.

Final Comments

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to say about the program, the job linkages participants offered the following comments.

- *The program was excellent because the instructor was great.*
- *The help they give is the best they can do. They try their best.*
- *Don't ever get rid of it because it does a lot of good, especially with people like Angie. At first I felt that if I didn't know something, don't ask. But Angie told me to speak up, be heard, and be straight forward.*
- *When I got into the class at first, I was down on myself. But Angie is so perky! That's what I take away every day. I try to take it the same way she sees life.*
- *I think the little group there is wonderful. They're not just doing a job. They're warmhearted and very caring. They go out of their way to help.*
- *I think the program should continue. I'm really happy with my job now and I think it is mainly due to job linkages steering me to the right path.*

Participant Profiles

Data from the intake forms and records of 25 (more than 90% of the total) extension participants were used to create a profile of the group. Women outnumbered men in the program, and 85 percent of these participants were Hispanic. More than half (54%) were 21 to 34 years of age with 19 percent from 35-44 years of age. The 18-20 age range included 15 percent of the participants. Eight percent were between 45 and 54 years of age; one person (4%) was over 55 years old. Just over three quarters of the participants were single, divorced, or separated. Many were single parents. Only six (23%) reported receiving Food Stamps with three people showing welfare income. Records showed that four people (15%) were enrolled in an education or training program when they came to the job linkages program. Three reported English as a Second Language, while the fourth was enrolled at a central city community college. Over half reported having a car for personal transportation with five more saying a family vehicle was available.

Work experience among this group included: package delivery, customer service, telemarketing, assembly, machining, quality control checker, cashier, laundry/ housekeeping, certified nursing assistant, teacher's aide, drafting aide, janitor, production supervisor, loan processor, waiter, clerical, and shipping clerk. The group also had barriers that could make it hard to find and keep a quality job. For example, the intake forms identified various barriers among these participants (See box).

Barriers Identified*	Number of Participants
Lack of income for training/job search	22 (85%)
Lack of recent work experience	14 (54%)
Lack of knowledge/resources to conduct a job search	16 (62%)
Lack of awareness of local labor market	12 (47%)

*multirole responses possible for each person

Based on the files reviewed, this group appears to share many issues with other low income and unemployed people in terms of being in and out of work, dealing with domestic violence, underestimating how much they need to earn to support themselves, and being uncertain about job direction. However in contrast to the group discussed in the initial report, there were fewer language barriers in this group, more work experience, and higher levels of education. The second group was also somewhat younger.

Other Outlooks on Job Linkages

Based on a final interview with the job linkages staff leader and all other sources of information, a picture of how Friendly House learned and adjusted through the pilot period emerged. Initially, the staff had been assembled from various Friendly House programs. Thus, they had had to develop a working rapport and an understanding of each other's skills. Over time, the group became closer and learned to "work together well as a team." Also, the development of the new facilities highlighted how much surroundings affect a program and a staff.

Educational Attainment
Comparison of Initial and Extension Participants

Educational Level	% Initial Participants	% Extension Participants
Less than 12th Grade	51 %	28 %
High school diploma or GED	49 %	40 %
Some college	20 %*	28 %
College graduate	0	4 %

*Duplicated count with the high school diploma and GED category.

But, perhaps the most significant lesson learned among the Friendly House staff was how to work effectively with employers and to make judgements about their appropriateness for participants. On one hand, staff members realized that employers could not always be expected to fit into Friendly House's way of doing things. On the other, not all of the employers who expressed an interest in the program were good matches for the participants. However, all of the employer relationships revealed that both the businesses and the program have to benefit from their involvement. In addition, it became obvious that employers could contribute to the program in a variety of ways besides attending Community Jobs Team meetings. This understanding resulted in part from going to employers' and Community Jobs Team members' facilities. "Getting out" broadened everyone's understanding of the issues important to employers and other organizations.

Especially after the United Way project began in which participants did not have to be EC residents to be eligible for participation, Friendly House reaffirmed that local residents tend to have many barriers to employment. While there was pride in participants' accomplishments, the realities of working with a generally under-skilled clientele were inescapable. The staff reportedly mastered the cycle of participants starting and leaving jobs, with their greatest attention being needed in the first two weeks to a month of work. Leaders estimated that the job linkages program must enroll and place two to three times more people than the number required to meet contractual obligations. Despite the complexities of the program though, it was reported that job linkages is a good strategy for EC residents because many still "just need contacts" to go to work.

Caring about each person was a hallmark of this program. The keys to caring service were described as the ability to find something positive in every client and to understand that each one is different. Another important part of service was explained as being straightforward with participants about their options. For example, participants would ask for help in finding "better" jobs than they had had in the past. But considering their language skills or barriers, the type of job they defined as better may not have been realistic for them without further

training or education. The staff members admitted that the placement-oriented job linkages program could help residents get a job, but because of their situations, it may not be any more satisfying than what they had done in the past. For this type of participant, further training was the best option. However, many participants defined success as getting a job quickly, and were thus reluctant to attend further training or were unable to afford it. Currently Friendly House is designing new short-term training opportunities in specific fields with the input of a few major EC employers. These programs may help many who want to retool or change careers. In addition, the agency has instituted computer classes in Spanish.

Finally the staff reported that an inaccurate image in the community of Friendly House as just for Spanish speakers or new immigrants or those without any skills has made more outreach to referral sources, employers, and potential participants key to job linkages' future success.

Continuing Promise

Considering the current transition to a "new economy" and its emphases on people and knowledge, employment services are critical to ensuring that today's "have nots" can still become tomorrow's "haves." Friendly House's workforce support program remains promising because it helps residents to be more competitive for local jobs. Friendly House continues to be on the right track, especially considering the organization's new training efforts. This demonstration project underscores the fact that modest amounts of assistance can result in substantial gains for some individuals.

The Friendly House experience confirms that the placement/job readiness model is an important service for the community. Participants who learn the fundamentals of job readiness can then take advantage of the strong economy on their own. For example, one individual had the confidence to change hotel jobs because the second one paid more. Another participant found an employer closer to her home, while another gained the wherewithal to seek out an employer with specific training opportunities.

This type of program appears to be especially suited to those whose primary barrier is lack of information and confidence or who have some assets to balance out the obstacles they face. Friendly House needs to be clear about the type of participant for whom workforce support is best and expand that base through current and new neighborhood contacts. Unfortunately however, this direction leaves out many residents who need substantially more training, assistance, and services. As designed originally, workforce support is just one of the types of employment assistance needed in the EC. The agency should review its own vision of employment services and the audiences and programs it serves best. Then, in conjunction with other local service providers, businesses, and institutions, Friendly House should look at the EC audiences and determine how to create (and pay for) the continuum of employment services envisioned by the entire job linkages initiative.

Red Flags for Job Linkages

"Successful employment programs…offer a wide range of individualized services; have a central focus on employment; have close ties to local employers; and are intensive, setting high expectations for participation."[4] Considering these attributes and Friendly House's tradition of service, some of the participants' responses should raise red flags for the

program's leaders. For example, some participants reported that Friendly House "somewhat" prepared them for work. Although participants valued the program's personal attention, the *emphasis on the caring staff may also be covering a feeling that the program is not as helpful* as it could be. Thus, the instruction and job assistance may need more depth and intensity.

Although programs such as this are often assigned unrealistic "numbers," attrition should be a significant concern for Friendly House considering the high stakes of performance and the changes desired in the community. Admittedly employment services are challenging to operate. In addition, research and experience have shown that participants experiment with types of work and employers. However, jobs, retention, and progress in the workforce are the reasons why organizations undertake these types of services. To the greatest extent possible, program activities should reduce the time participants need to settle into a job (which hopefully contributes to long-term "attachment" to work) through better matches, more information, more personal knowledge, more intervention, and other means. Friendly House itself will benefit from fewer negative situations with employers if participants stay on the job longer. Businesses have learned that it is better to maintain customers (read participants, employers, and neighborhood contacts) is than to find new ones. That lesson applies to this program as well.

A Six Component Framework

Friendly House learned quickly that every business that needs workers is not necessarily a good match for participants. Plus, the participants who valued training opportunities at their current jobs remind us that workforce support may be most valuable when it focuses on employers with both reasonable starting jobs and opportunities for training. An employer that can offer quality workers immediate wages and the opportunity to gain new skills may be the best choice for Friendly House's clientele. Unfortunately, participants focused on immediate jobs and staff anxious to make placements may have trouble visualizing the future and understanding how to create career paths. Friendly House could help by being part of a network of similar firms in particular industries. Since "chaining" jobs together in a group of related firms (or parts of a large company) is critical to career development, the information in a workforce support program must be broad and accurate enough to help staff and participants identify "the next move" again and again.

The job linkages leaders may also want to consider whether there are any differences between "employability" and "job readiness." While the terms often are used interchangeably, employability could be viewed as going beyond filling out applications to include career development. The Friendly House would do well to define employability in terms of long-term success for residents and to ensure that all of its activities are aligned with that vision.

The following six workforce support components provide a planning and evaluation framework that may help Friendly House to review its operations over time in terms of participants, employers, and staff.

Does the job linkages program include appropriate attention, activities, and services for participants and staff to develop:

- **Sufficient information about a range of EC employers with jobs at various levels**

Can participants and staff look at a variety of area businesses and assess their pros and cons as employers? Can they identify the additional skills needed to match the *requirements in businesses where they* would like to work? Are there enough facts and figures to make informed choices about jobs or training? Is there enough data to plan for the next job?

- **Knowledge of the industries in the EC and throughout the metropolitan region**
  Do participants and staff have a sense of the breadth of the local economy and how industries, and thus opportunities, relate to one another? Can they relate preferences, aptitudes, and skills to a particular industry?

- **An understanding of personal strengths and preferences and the need for lifelong learning**
  In today's competitive marketplace, are participants realizing the importance of continual learning? Is there enough case management and other support to follow through?

- **The ability to analyze options and visualize the desired outcomes**
  Are participants and staff able to imagine long-term careers for individuals? Are their decision making skills sharp enough for a competitive economy? Do staff and participants understand the "new economy" and how it affects jobs and program operations?

- **Confidence and resilience along with the ability to set and follow through on goals**
  Have participants learned to take the incremental steps needed to achieve a goal? Can they deal constructively with setbacks?

- **The job readiness skills that will foster job retention and quick reemployment**
  Can participants apply the program's knowledge in the real world?

Finally, does the program integrate these pieces for all those concerned? Is it a coherent, meaningful "package?"

Friendly House's program experience confirms the importance of opening up to the world outside of the agency's walls. Thus, the organization's inward-looking culture may warrant attention. In addition, Friendly House's participant records, assessment tools, and internal measures of success could do more to support increasingly creative services. Forms and assessments could be much more meaningful to staff and to participants. Skill assessments in Spanish are recommended to provide more information to Spanish-speakers and to help them to take advantage of a growing demand for bilingual workers. In addition, the number of placements as a success measure, while important, might be more telling if it was augmented by other items such as the number of people who moved on to better jobs or more training. Most importantly, what measures will show whether or not employment is increasing in the community?

Friendly House has shown that job linkages can be beneficial to participants. Now Friendly House must ensure that these short-term services are as intensive and complete as possible. The first report concluded with the advice "get ready to run." Friendly House has made improvements to get up to speed. Now, like the person who builds a career job-by-job, the organization is ready to take the next steps toward quality community employment services.

Recommendations for Friendly House

- Continue to diversify employer contacts by targeting EC employers in specific industries with both opportunities for training and advancement and reasonable entry-level jobs. Coordinate with the systems detailed in the Arizona Workforce Development Plan and used by such organizations as Greater Phoenix Economic Council and the Governor's Strategic Plan for Economic Development in addition to the Phoenix Community and Economic Development Department. The job linkages program will always need to have relationships with a broad range of large and small employers, but targeting specific types of jobs and businesses supports advancement, coordination, and quality.
- Develop models of "chaining" in specific industries. For example, what employer(s) would be the best match if the participant wants to be employed in the financial services industry for a long time? Where should they start? What is a viable "chain" for that person? For pathways prevalent in the EC and attractive to a range of participants, develop contacts and networks with appropriate employers.
- Review the eight characteristics of the new economy as described in Morrison Institute's *The New Economy: A Guide for Arizona* and consider their implications for the program.
- Expand neighborhood outreach contacts for the program. Continue to develop the program's visibility.
- Review and revise participant records and assessment tools to support participants' choices, ongoing evaluation, and further training.
- Invest in staff training and development so that staff members apply knowledge of adult education, economic development, career development, and human resources administration to the job linkages program.
- Continue to review instruction to ensure its intensity and inclusion of the six-part planning framework. Think through the "what ifs" of an economic downturn. Consider whether program activities are sufficient to insure that job linkages participants would still be competitive if the supply of labor increased.
- Review the major reasons for attrition at various points in the program. Review the cases of those who have left jobs to determine what changes might be needed in the job readiness class or support services.
- Join with other service providers to think through the development of an EC continuum of services that takes advantage of the strengths of each organization.
- Investigate incentives, support systems (*i.e.*, child care, transportation, computer loans), or nontraditional delivery mechanisms (*i.e.*, distance or web-based learning through Friendly House's computer center) that would encourage participants to obtain further training. Work with current participants to identify and test the incentives and systems to determine what would be most attractive to and effective for those with the least skills.
- Expand the use of technology whenever possible for all facets of job linkages. Investigate further opportunities to use technology to help participants overcome language barriers.

A Rich Return from Demonstration Efforts

Keys Community Center and Friendly House both ended up with variations on "first step" employment programs. They focused on employability rather than long-term training. Despite their similarities however, they cannot be compared directly with one another. Table 1 provides an overview of the two.

The job linkages programs affirmed the importance of personal growth, skills, and support to participants, the central role of staff members, and the benefits of solid employer connections in community employment programs. In addition, they showed how quickly the costs of such programs can be matched by wages and benefits. The programs also illustrated that individuals' journeys to long-term work include advances and setbacks, and underscored the challenge of creating a network of appropriate employers.

Based on the demonstration experience, job linkages programs are:

- Labor and time intensive
- Information intensive
- Network oriented and individually oriented
- Related to other community issues such as health care, transportation, and housing

Notable Lessons and Issues

The more than two years of job linkages experience confirmed some existing knowledge about employment services and provided some new issues to consider. The following items echo many of the recommendations given to the demonstration sites. However, they will be of interest to any organization that funds or operates employment services.

Reconnecting Community Organizations and Employers

Community organizations have long sought to help residents find jobs. But in recent years such factors as limitations of time and staff, dramatic population and economic growth, changes in the business environment, shifts in public policy, and an emphasis on process over performance have made it harder for community groups to deliver quality services. The job linkages programs with their Community Jobs Teams provided examples of how to begin to create the relationships between community groups and employers that over time could reconnect the now disparate groups.

However, the team aspect of the programs warrants much more attention. Building a team for job linkages is still a good idea. But, it needs to be reconsidered. Monthly meetings and the board of directors model used at first by both programs did not work as well as anticipated. The members were very busy and may not have understood or been prepared for an active operational or oversight role. In addition, the contractors were accustomed to being in charge and others involved were used to following the wishes of the "lead" agency.

Table 1

Job Linkages Demonstration Projects

Keys Community Center	Friendly House
• Decade of service in social services and adult education	• More than 70 years of social, employment, education, and legal services
• 4-weeks of training, connections to a core of 6 local employers in a variety of industries	• 2 weeks of training, connections to a core of about 5 employers in a variety of industries
• 213 inquiries ›157 educational assessments ›107 started training ›77 graduated ›51 began jobs ›7 more went to more training/education	• 112 inquiries ›89 EC residents enrolling ›72 starting employability class ›51 starting jobs ›33 completing the 120 day retention
• Estimated earnings among participants over the life of the project: $304,000	• Estimated earnings among participants over the life of the project: $367,200
Lessons Learned:	**Lessons Learned:**
• Strong relationships with a finite number of employers in various fields offer participants a range of options and the staff a manageable load. Hires result from positive relationships with employers, solid training, and strong case management.	• Job readiness skills and employer connections open doors to new opportunities and serve participants as they make decisions about work over time. Modest amounts of training can pay dividends for some people.
• Place-oriented employment services work for neighborhoods. But, matching jobs and interests is as important as connecting "local people with local jobs." The choice of employment is critical to the individual's success. Thus, a variety of employer relationships is necessary.	• Participants value quality instruction, personal support, and job connections.
• Positive relationships with temporary services provide valuable routes to many types of jobs. Staffing companies allow participants to try different jobs and build a work history. They may also be the only access to long-term quality jobs with some important employers.	• Lack of English language skills is one of the toughest barriers to overcome, particularly in this service model. Addressing this barrier in creative ways is critical.
• STRIDE participants benefit from the combination of skills, learning, and support. The group experience is an important factor in preparing for the realities of the work place. Focusing on the combination is more effective than providing one without the others.	• Expanding the employer base benefited the program and EC residents. Breadth, depth, and appropriateness of the employer connections are critical features of the program.
• Program and staff development must focus on knowledge in four areas: economy and employers; the best adult education/learning techniques; organizational, human resources, and career development, and collaborative community problem solving.	• Facilities make a difference in the presentation and operation of the program.

Job linkage programs are labor and time intensive. Neighborhood activities often rely on the dedication of volunteers. At the same time, businesses now value speed, efficiency, and effectiveness more than ever. A mismatch in the styles among the three parties can easily derail projects that are perceived to be valuable to all. More avenues for developing productive, trusting relationships among community members, organizations, and employers are clearly needed. As one response, community and neighborhood organizations need to make strategic decisions and work together. For example, the targeting of specific industries or groups of firms in a particular location may facilitate identifying patterns of need among businesses and developing support systems for people. In addition, a network of service providers that can speak with employers with one voice will extend the reach of each community player.

The programs' experience revealed the following "rules" for working with employers: 1) Build a trusting relationship; 2) Make sure there is a return on the employer's investment; 3) Understand and honor the firm's policies, processes, and culture; 4) Make the best match possible; 5) View each business both as a unique entity and part of a larger network.

Matching People and Jobs

The job linkages programs highlighted that "a job" does not guarantee long-term employment. Personal preferences and aptitudes must be taken into account. Activities that foster an awareness of personal desires and guidance in planning are critical to "attaching" people to the labor force.

The need to match people with jobs underscores the importance of career development expertise and knowledge of tools that inform decisions about skills, training, and jobs. It also means that programs must draw on everything from psychology to adult education, human resources, economic development, and other topics to prepare participants for the world of work. In addition, program staffs require sufficient knowledge of the economy to be clear with participants about will be needed to get the jobs they want. Thus, organizations must view staff development—especially in career development and the local economy—and assessment as priorities in the future. At this stage, further development of job linkages depends on knowledge and experience in five areas:

- Economy, industries, and employers
- Technology
- Human resources and career development
- Adult learning and education
- Human services

Realistically however, even the best matches may fail. Programs and funders must be prepared for participants to lose (or choose to leave) a job or jobs before they become comfortable with being workers. However this does not mean that programs should not worry about attrition and prevention of job loss. Substantial efforts should be made to keep participants working, rather than job-hopping.

Caring Truly Counts

A sense of caring and personal support are as important as information about jobs and careers, and may actually be the catalyst participants need to get or keep a job. Confidence and motivation are critical ingredients in long-term workplace success. Caring was the demonstration programs' strongest attribute and an example of where community organizations may shine over other types of institutions.

More Capacity for Greater Success

Job linkages illustrated that if community groups want to help increase employment, they must now be prepared for a complex, demanding effort. From an organizational point of view, job linkages' challenges come from addressing complex problems and serving very different audiences at once. The program is complicated by a dynamic, competitive business environment and by the unpredictability of individuals. Successful operations understand what both businesses and people are up against in the marketplace. They have the facilities to prepare people and the savvy to be economy "insiders."

The ideal combination of information and experience is tough—but very possible—for programs to master, whether established or brand new. Because job linkages requires staff and community partners with an unusual combination of skills and the ability to synthesize and apply knowledge from many fields, organizational development, capacity building, and networking are vital. In critical areas such as networking and technology, community organizations—and the public agencies that fund them—will not be well-served by insisting organizations make it "on their own." In Morrison Institute for Public Policy's recent publication, *The New Economy: A Guide for Arizona*, one of the new economy characteristics is "Alliances are the way to get things done." This is particularly true for job linkages. Alliances will help residents in the workforce and increase the sustainability of the program. One of the best ways to generate these desirable alliances is to extend the capabilities of community organizations.

Administration

For the newer demonstration organization, the job linkages learning curve was particularly steep. For the established group, the greatest challenge was to alter their established operations and organizational culture to accommodate job linkages. The sites started with similar contracts, but administered them differently. For both organizations, the performance contracting created unexpectedly stressful situations. The performance systems to a degree fostered a "numbers" orientation and focused attention on "collecting" rather than on services. Better ways of challenging service providers and rewarding innovation are warranted. A combination of operating support and incentive payments may be a better method of operation. At the least, flexibility in contracting and administration is vital to keeping the emphasis on programming rather than allowing it to shift to bureaucracy.

Placement numbers are, as they should be, an obvious and common mark of success for community employment programs. However, more thought is needed for reasonable target measures in the areas of retention, upgrading, and community results. Both programs met their contractual requirements, but they learned that the desired rates of job attainment and retention should also be more flexible. High expectations for intense programs are a significant success factor, but unrealistic targets again push the program's attention to numbers instead of quality.

Sense of Place

Attachment to a place is one of job linkages' greatest strengths because it focuses attention on specific people, employers, and community issues. Because employment is such a complex topic, a specific area of focus allows participants and staff to understand issues and situations more readily and fully. But, hard and fast boundaries create limitations as well. The focus on place has to be balanced by the fact that individuals will make choices. People may get jobs outside the area or move when they have made more definite career plans. However, the programs' emphasis should remain on matching local people and local jobs and working to keep them in the community as part of the process of revitalization.

Employment and Community Development

How can programs help to keep new workers in the area so that their wages support redevelopment? One answer is to mobilize participants to "give back." Another option is to more systematically address the issues that affect residents' concerns and ability to work and upgrade. Thus because of their impact on employment, housing, health, transportation, child care, and language are some of the issues that warrant substantial attention. A focus on work puts a different, and more immediate, spin on community development.

Easing the Next Steps

Good things can—and will—happen to many participants in these types of programs. But, even with the best training and the most caring services, progress will take time. People with the barriers illustrated in the demonstration programs will often struggle to work, go to school, and care for children. Residents will need to explore work and broaden their vision for and outlooks on jobs. Barriers will have to be dealt with over time.

Job linkages originally put as much emphasis on upgrading skills as on getting the first quality job. Since participants were anticipated to start wherever they could on the career ladder, a continuum of services would be needed to help them progress. The experience revealed how important a range of services is and how challenging it is to create. Again, a network of providers, businesses, and institutions must come together to devise new incentives and methods for making additional training and education accessible and more productive.

A New World for Community Organizations

The world is changing as much for community organizations as it is for businesses. Competition, accountability, technology, and shifting resources are just some of the issues. A great deal of thought is needed on how such organizations as the job linkages demonstrators can remain viable in the future. The residents in the area need assistance, and community organizations are important points for initial services. Community groups are especially good at creating a sense of place, caring, and addressing community issues. But, their days as employment service providers are numbered without mastering the new economy, technology, and related topics.

Program Development Issues

The most significant program development issues identified across the projects are:

- Developing an interest in the economy, companies, and jobs in addition to people
- Expanding the employer base to increase options for participants; Finding the information that will lead to strong relationships

- Extending programs' reach into neighborhoods through marketing and public relations
- Using technology for communications, networking, and training
- Determining how to stay in touch with participants to be able to help with upgrading and support
- Fostering progress to better and better jobs
- Addressing language barriers
- Working with a variety of employers, institutions, and organizations to create the continuum of services

Considerations for the City of Phoenix

Job linkages proved to be a viable strategy for a particular area. Because it is oriented to place and employment centers exist throughout the city, it is an idea that could work almost anywhere. Leaders should consider the following issues in planning further job linkages efforts and in administering other programs.

Operations

- Administrative flexibility supports creativity and innovation. The need for accountability for public funds needs to be balanced with opportunities to operate in new ways.

- Technical assistance and capacity building projects are investments that will pay off in new and better services. Scarce public resources may be best spent on making organizations stronger and more capable of delivering quality services and in expanding their access to new sources of funds. City departments could also play a role in developing networks among service providers, businesses, and other institutions.

- Community development and employment development go hand in hand because of the support systems needed to help and keep residents in the workforce. How can existing housing, transportation, and social services programs support local employment? In addition, what options do existing public programs offer for incentives (*i.e.*, scholarships, computers, child care) and support mechanisms to help participants continue ESL and other types of training?

Employment and Education

- Many of the residents who come to a community employment program have already fallen through the cracks of other systems. Thus, prevention is as much a job linkages strategy as job readiness. Although the City of Phoenix obviously does not control school programs, it wields influence in many ways. Thus, everything possible should be done to support school-to-work efforts and prevent the types of behaviors that push residents off the path to quality jobs. Helping organizations to keep kids in school, promote lifelong learning, foster high academic achievement, and develop work experience will reduce the number of residents who need second and third chances.

- Information about jobs and employers is fundamental to job linkages programs. However, the right facts and figures are often difficult to come by or are out of date. Considering the data gathered by city agencies for planning, development services, licensing and other purposes, a variety of departments could be helpful to community employment services. The wealth of data should be applied to support higher rates of

employment in neighborhoods. Geographic information services for example could map employers in a particular area. As with investing in capacity for community organizations, city departments should invest in sharing existing data and creating new types of information that could support employment.

Ready for Replication

Job linkages is promising for the EC and other distressed areas of Phoenix because of its connection to place, the presence of community organizations in other areas, and the strong economy. However, replication has to have enough training, funds, commitment, and staff to work. And, other organizations need to learn from the experiences of the two pioneers.

Endnotes

1. *Project STRIDE: Welcome Revivals* and *Job Linkages Review: Enterprise Community Team and Friendly House*, Morrison Institute for Public Policy.
2. See reports by Pat Gober, Betsy Burns, and Tom Rex in Community Outreach Partnership Center review, Morrison Institute for Public Policy.
3. Enriquez, Luis, *City of Phoenix Enterprise Community Job Linkage Demonstration Project Final Report*, Friendly House, October 15, 1999.
4. *Strategies to Promote Education, Skill Development, and Career Advancement Opportunities for Low-Skilled Workers*, National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices, 1998.

Morrison Institute for Public Policy
School of Public Affairs
College of Public Programs
Arizona State University
PO Box 874405
Tempe, Arizona 85287-4405

(480) 965-4525 Fax (480) 965-9219
http://www.asu.edu/copp/morrison